



CITY OF DECATUR ILLINOIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Council approves 2024 budget, garbage/recycling overhaul, support of senior services

Decatur, IL – Highlights from the December 4, 2023, Decatur City Council meeting include approval of several changes to the garbage/recycling ordinance, adoption of the 2024 City budget, and an agreement to further support services for senior citizens in Decatur.

Garbage/Recycling changes

On Monday night the Decatur City Council approved several revisions to the Garbage & Recycling ordinance along with a rate change. Local haulers have not received a rate increase since July 2021, however Council members agreed to an adjustment to help offset their increasing costs. Many non-rate changes were also approved based on study session discussions and feedback from residential customers.

The monthly base rate beginning in 2024 will go from \$19/month to \$23.50/month. Other changes remove the cart rental fees (typically \$4/month) and other miscellaneous fees charged by haulers, meaning a majority of residential customers will realize no increase in 2024, with some even paying less. The base rate will increase 4 percent each year after 2024.

A summary of major non-rate changes:

- Tote/cart standard: All residential customers must use a 64 or 96-gallon wheeled tote for garbage collection, and a separate 64 or 96-gallon wheeled tote for recycling. It will be the responsibility of the **private hauler** to provide and replace these carts at no additional charge above the base rate. Customers that already have the appropriate 64 or 96-gallon wheeled totes may continue to use them. Alternatively, they can use them for yard waste or some other purpose and ask their private hauler for a new cart. If you don't want your old tote/cart/garbage bin, your hauler will collect it and it will not count as one of your "bulky" items.
- Alley pickup: With some exceptions, most alley pick-ups have been eliminated. Collection will be transitioned to the curb/street over a 3-4 month phase-in period. Haulers, not the City, will be empowered to determine if alley service should continue for certain customers.

- Basic Service defined: Once weekly garbage collection, once weekly recycling collection and disposal, and unlimited yard waste removal for 6 weeks in the spring and 6 weeks in the fall, at times set by the City (since climate changes can influence the “best” time for yard waste collection). Basic Service also includes 5 separate bulky waste collections at the curb side each year, with each collection allowing up to 5 bulky items. So a total of 25 bulky items can be picked up each year. Residents must call their private hauler to set up a bulky pickup.
- Yard waste: Customers who want premium yard waste services (beyond what is provided in “basic service”) will be free to seek out additional yard waste collection from any hauler of their choosing. Each hauler will be required to post with the City (every Jan. 1) their rates for premium service.

Other changes to provide further customer protection include:

- If a customer misses an entire weekly collection cycle, the hauler must credit their bill for 50% of a month’s rate
- The City can change boundaries and re-assign an entire neighborhood to a different hauler if there is a pattern of poor service
- If customers are assessed an extra fee for having garbage “overages” (extra garbage not fitting in the cart, or excessive bulky waste) then the hauler must provide photographic evidence of the overage
- Customers can request a pause in service and billing when they are absent for several months without a penalty

The City intends to create a comprehensive garbage/recycling webpage in the near future to better explain the new ordinance and fee structure.

2024 City Budget

The 2024 City budget has been adopted by City Council. Minor adjustments were made following two study sessions and after gathering public input. Council members indicated they will support a 3 percent increase to the property tax levy, down from when the budget was proposed with a 7 percent increase. The 2024 budget includes revenue from a proposed storage unit fee and a streaming tax, although those items have yet to be approved.

The budget is a revenue and expenditure plan. Changes to tax levies, creation of new taxes, new contracts and capital projects, etc. all require separate votes by the City Council to be adopted. The City’s fiscal year begins January 1, 2024 and ends December 31, 2024. The full budget can be viewed at <https://decaturil.gov/departments/finance/city-budget/>

Supporting Senior Services

Services for senior citizens in Decatur will continue to improve thanks to a partnership between the City and the Decatur Park District. For many years the City’s budget included a subsidy for the Decatur Senior Center to support senior services. The center has since closed its operations and

much of the senior programming is being transitioned to the Park District.

The Park District intends to create a “one stop shop” by housing many senior citizen services in one building. They plan to expand their Scovill Park West facility, and once constructed, the Community Home Environmental Learning Project (CHELP) will move their independent operations there. Council members supported this plan, noting the senior population continues to grow, and agreed to increase the 2024 subsidy to \$99,500.

In other business

In other business...City Manager Scot Wrighton has announced he will retire in May 2024. The City will follow up with more information about the replacement process. Wrighton was hired as City Manager in January 2019.

More information about these topics can be found in the City Council Agenda packet, downloadable/viewable here: www.decaturl.gov/mayor-and-council/council-meetings/

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